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LETTER DATED 26 MAY 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 26 May 1997 addressed to you by Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq. The letter concerns the fact that the United States of America has, for no good reason, placed on hold an application, submitted in accordance with Security Council resolution 986 (1995) and contained in document S/AC.15/COMM.387, concerning the supply of a malaria-control insecticide. This is at a time when the need for this item is becoming acute because of the rapid spread of malaria in Iraq and, in particular, in the country's northern governorates.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 25 May 1997 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General

The representative of the United States of America in the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) has placed on hold the application contained in document S/AC.25/1997/COMM.387 concerning the supply of a malaria-control insecticide called Icon that the Iraqi Ministry of Health had contracted to purchase from the British company Zeneca. He has done so on the pretext that the item is not included in the categorized list of supplies annexed to the purchase and distribution plan approved by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. When we sent to the secretariat of the 661 Committee a photocopy of the page of the categorized list on which the item appears, thus proving beyond any doubt that the item is indeed included in the aforesaid list, the representative of the United States of America again objected to the item being supplied on the grounds that the quantity ordered was greater than that stated in the list.

I should like to acquaint you with the facts of the matter, which are as follows:

1. Clear signs of malaria began to appear in Iraq's three northern governorates (Dohuk, Sulaymaniyah and Irbil) in 1995, and 100,000 confirmed cases were reported at that time. This was because of the absence from the area of the central authorities and their associated institutions.

2. The Ministry of Health drew the attention of the World Health Organization (WHO) to this serious situation in an official memorandum, pointing out the danger it posed not only to Iraq but also to neighbouring countries (the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey). A regional meeting of representatives of Iraq and these countries was then convened in Istanbul under the auspices of WHO in order to adopt speedy measures to contain the spread of the epidemic, and decisions were taken with a view to controlling the disease, including a decision by WHO to import Icon.

3. It is three years since this situation arose, and in that time only a very small quantity of Icon reached Iraq because of the inability of WHO to obtain the necessary resources. This caused the disease to spread to the governorates of Diyala, Kirkuk and Mosul, which border on the three northern governorates, and the number of confirmed cases has multiplied. With the signing of the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations Secretariat on the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995), we were told that Iraq could now import this item under the terms of the memorandum.

4. When the categorized list of items was drawn up in mid-1996, the estimated quantity of Icon given was that that would have been sufficient for spraying to be carried out in the three northern governorates had the Icon actually been delivered in 1996. However, another mosquito breeding season having passed and the disease having spread to three more governorates, the health authorities

concerned were obliged to increase the quantity in order to ensure that there would now be enough for six governorates. The standard sanitary procedure followed in all parts of the world is that all areas in which an epidemic has spread should be sprayed and that no area should be singled out to the exclusion of others.

That the United States representative objects to the proposed quantity constitutes yet another disgrace calling for further protest and condemnation. United States opposition to supplying Iraq with a substance necessary to control an epidemic of malaria is a clear manifestation of that country's policy of enmity towards the Iraqi people and, in particular, towards Iraq's Kurdish citizens given that the malaria epidemic is more widespread in northern Iraq than elsewhere.

The United States Government sheds crocodile tears for the Iraqi Kurds and maintains an illegal and unlawful aerial embargo on northern Iraq. At the same time, it is killing tens of thousands of Iraqi Kurds by refusing to approve a contract for the purchase of an insecticide for use in controlling the malaria epidemic.

I request that you intervene personally, as is required of you in accordance with your responsibilities under the memorandum of understanding of 20 May 1996, so that an expeditious solution to this humanitarian issue may be found.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mohammed Said AL-SAHAF
Minister for Foreign Affairs